Milford Budget Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Approved 11/9/04
Meeting Date 11/2/04

Attendance:
      BAC Members:
      Therese Muller
      Bill Fitzpatrick
      Didi Carter
      Mike Roske
      Bob Courage
      Kevin Taylor
      Don Caisse
      Gil Archambault
      Joe Stella (late)

Topics of Discussion:
      Approval of Minutes
      Discussion of Town Clerk/Tax Collector Reorganization
      Department Reviews
            Administration - Information Systems
            Fire
      Closing

Next Meeting: Next BAC meeting will be at 7:30 on Tuesday 11/9, in the Keyes Meeting Room upstairs at the Wadleigh Memorial Library.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The BAC voted 8-0 (1 absent) to amend and then approve the amended meeting minutes of the 10/26 BAC meeting. Approved minutes will be forwarded to BAC members and Dawn Griska. Dawn will save the minutes in .PDF format and forward them to Alan Woolfson for posting to the town's website.

DISCUSSION OF TOWN CLERK/TAX COLLECTOR REORGANIZATION

Therese Muller presented an alternative plan to address the division of the Town Clerk and Tax Collector positions, tentatively titled "BAC Proposed Re-organization". This plan differs from the BOS approved plan in that the Town Clerk retains the role of Deputy Tax collector and therefore retains her existing salary. The AP/AR Coordinator maintains the same accounting role currently being performed, remaining a 30 hour position at labor grade 12. The presented plan would remain in effect until the next election of Town Clerk, at which time the BOS approved plan would be enacted.

The proposed plan offers a savings of approximately $34,600 per year over the current organization, an amount approximately equal to the one eliminated position. This represents a savings of $24,000 over the BOS approved organization, which is estimated to have an annual cost savings of $10,893.31.

Discussion of the BAC proposed plan centered around the fact that it does not completely separate the Town Clerk from the Tax Collector's duties, the primary reason for performing the reorganization. The BAC plan also eliminates pay increases and increases in working hours for the AP/AR Coordinator, generating a significant (~$17,000) savings over the BOS approved plan. Another large segment of the

BAC savings are achieved by applying a 5% increase to the Finance Director's salary instead of a 10% increase as approved by the board. By not increasing these salaries as drastically, and realizing the associated benefits savings, the BAC plan represented large enough cost savings on an annual basis to be considered.

Without voting, the consensus of the BAC was to eliminate the BAC proposal as not accomplishing the goals of the reorganization, and potentially causing even more difficulty for morale in the Town Clerk's office by taking the role of Deputy Tax Collector away from the current Deputy and giving the position to the current Town Clerk.

DEPARTMENT REVIEWS
Information Systems

As noted in the Proposed 2005 Operating Budget materials, the current Data Operations Technician (DOT) has requested several high-cost items to be added to the 2005 budget over and above the current budget.

The single largest item in the budget request is for $79,800 to cover the cost of PC replacements. These replacements are mainly for the Police Department laptops used in cruisers, and desktops used at the station. During discussion of the Police Department, the BAC noted that the use of Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) would eliminate the need for upgraded laptops for the Police Department, but the cost differential for MDTs is still unknown at this time. It was asked if this equipment was covered by the Police Station bond. The answer is no. Under the current arrangement, the DOT is responsible for all computing equipment across all departments. The BAC noted that while this setup may make it easier for the DOT to manage the resources, it makes it more difficult for individual department computing needs to be specified.

Computer replacements are needed for three major reasons: (1) to replace older laptops that no longer support current versions of software, such as the police management software, (2) to replace older systems that are beginning to experience hardware failures, and (3) to replace older no-name systems with standard Dell desktops.

In addition to the desktops and laptops, the DOT has requested $20,000 to replace two servers and add a third. Finally, the DOT has requested $18,000 for wiring and other infrastructure upgrades within Town Hall. The DOT also requested funding for a half-time assistant to provide help-desk and PC repair capabilities, but this additional position has previously been rejected by the BOS.

The BAC discussed the fact that there does not appear to be a long-term technology plan for the Town. Because of this, the BAC does not have information to determine whether or not the requested PC and server replacements move the Town's capabilities in the correct direction to support future needs.

As noted during other discussions, the BOS is considering contracting a study from Rand Associates to recommend a technology plan. The BAC concurs that there needs to be better control of and planning for computing resources in the town.

The BAC voted 9-0 in agreement with the following statements:
1) Information Systems requires better control and planning, possibly with the assistance of an outside consultant.

2) The BOS must determine how much to invest in computer replacements. The BAC supports some level of investment, especially in support of the Police Department.
3) The BAC supports updating the wiring infrastructure within Town Hall.

Fire Department

At the discussion meeting regarding warrant articles for the 2005 ballot, the BOS decided not to support a Warrant Article for a fire engine replacement. This replacement was recommended by both PRIMEX and the Milford CIP, although the CIP recommended delaying the purchase until 2006. Failure to replace this engine will result in an increase in fire insurance costs for property owners in Milford, but these costs have not been quantified.

The BOS also discussed the need for a Training Captain. This officer fills many roles, including training of other officers and maintenance of vehicles. Achieving level one certification for the approved new on-call fire officers will require hundreds of hours of training and a cost of $460 per officer.

It was noted that some savings could be achieved by not sending two pieces of fire apparatus to accident scenes where a Police officer is first on scene and makes a "no-injuries" call. Because Police Officers are not trained paramedics, the Fire Department must respond as if there are still possible injuries at the scene. There are additional training costs to cross-train Police officers to be properly able to judge injuries at the scene. Even then, there is some risk that improper judgment could put the Town at risk for a lawsuit.

In keeping with the Information Systems discussion of this meeting, the Fire Department has some additional needs for support. Currently, while en route to the scene of an incident at one of the industrial facilities in town, the Fire Captain on duty reviews a large paper log-book listing all facility plans and lists of potentially hazardous chemicals and other materials for the destination site. This book is kept up-to-date only by updating the paper copy – a task performed by the Training Officer. It would be extremely helpful for the Fire Department to have access to a current electronic database of materials that would be automatically kept current to reduce the risk of unknown exposures.

Finally, the Fire Department has projected an over-budget expense in 2004 for fuel (diesel, gas, and heating oil). A request for the 2005 budget to include an $8,000 increase in this line item has been rejected by the BOS with the instruction to find the money elsewhere within the Fire Department budget. Past BAC members informed the current BAC that the Fire Chief had noted during planning for the 2004 budget that this fuel account was insufficient, but was still not funded at the requested level for 2004.

As the remainder of the Fire Department budget does not appear to have any areas that can be reduced by a total of $8,000, the BAC voted 7-2 to recommend that the BOS add this cost to the Fire Department budget. During discussion prior to this vote, the BAC was sure to note that this decision was not intended to set a precedent for covering increased fuel costs in every town department. The decision was based on a detailed analysis of the Fire Department's budget alone.

OTHER DISCUSSION

With the completion of the review of all DPW-related budgets, the Tuesday 11/9 BAC meeting will focus on the DPW.

CLOSING

The BAC meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Next meeting will be in the Keyes Meeting Room (upstairs in the Library) at 7:30 on Tuesday 11/9/04.

ACTION ITEMS FROM 11/2 MEETING:

None.

VOTES AT THE 11/2 MEETING:

"Information Systems requires better control and planning, possibly with the assistance of an outside consultant."
       BAC voted to support this statement (9-0)

"The BAC recommends that the BOS determine how much to invest in computer replacements. The BAC supports some level of investment, especially in support of the Police Department."
       BAC voted to support this statement (9-0)

"The BAC supports updating the wiring infrastructure within Town Hall."
       BAC voted to support this statement (9-0)

"The BAC supports adding $8000 to the Fire Department budget to cover the increased costs of fuel – diesel, gasoline, and heating oil – expected to be realized in 2005. Note that this decision was considered for a single case and is not intended to set a precedent for fuel cost increases in other departments."
       BAC voted to support this statement (7-2)

       ===END===================================